

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
OMB-01 IO-13 /070 W  
-----191142Z 009300 /12

R 190958Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2287  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
DIA WASHDC  
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 1841

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SY, JO  
SUBJECT: SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONS SO FAR UNAFFECTED BY  
PRESS REPORTS OF U.S. PAYMENTS TO HUSSEIN

REF: DAMASCUS 1342

SUMMARY: PROMINENT MEDIA COVERAGE ACCORDED THIS WEEK'S TRIP OF  
SENIOR SARG OFFICIALS TO JORDAN INDICATED SYRIANS  
DETERMINED MAINTAIN THEIR ALREADY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH  
JORDAN DESPITE EMBARRASSMENT CAUSED BY U.S. MEDIA REVELATIONS  
ON ALLEGED CIA PAYMENTS TO HUSSEIN. INITIALLY, SARG APPEARED  
THROWN OFF BALANCE BY STORIES AND ATTEMPTED TO CENSOR ANY  
PUBLICATIONS IN WHICH SUCH APPEARED. HOWEVER, MEETINGS AMONG  
SYRO-JORDANIAN COORDINATION COMMITTEES CONTINUED NORMALLY.  
SOME SYRIANS PRIVATELY CLAIMED TO SEE BACKING OFF ON THEIR  
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SIDE FROM CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH KING BUT WERE UNABLE TO OFFER  
ANY CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEIR ASSERTIONS.  
ASAD-HUSSEIN MEETINGS IN CAIRO, BAATH ANNIVERSARY  
STATEMENTS HAILING SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP, AND NOW  
PROMINENT COVERAGE GIVEN PRIMIN KHULAYFAWI VISIT TO JORDAN  
ARE SIGNALS THAT BASIC RELATIONSHIP REMAINS UNAFFECTED.  
WHILE BOTH SIDES MAY HAVE BECOME MORE REALISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS

FOR ACHIEVING "REAL UNITY" PROGNOSIS IS FOR BOTH STATES  
TO CONTINUE WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER AS PEACE PROCESS  
MOVES FORWARDS.

END SUMMARY.

1. VISIT OF PRIMIN KHULAYFAWI AND FONMIN KHADDAM TO  
AMMAN MARCH 16-17 SEEMS TO CONFIRM REPORTS RECEIVED FROM  
OTHER LOCAL SOURCES THAT SARG WILL CONTINUE PURSUE CLOSE  
RELATIONS WITH GOJ DESPITE EMBARRASSMENT CAUSED BY WP  
STORIES OF RECENT U.S. PAYMENTS TO HUSSEIN. PROMINENT MEDIA  
COVERAGE WAS GIVEN TO MEETING THEY HELD WITH ASAD IMMEDIATELY  
AFTER THEIR RETURN AND TO KHADDAM'S STATEMENTS THAT TWO  
SIDES REVIEWED STEPS TOWARDS "CONFEDERAL ACTION". IN RECENT  
WEEKS EMBOFFS HAVE TALKED TO A NUMBER OF SOURCES ABOUT  
EFFECTS OF THESE ALLEGATIONS. INITIALLY, SOME FRETTE  
THAT REVELATIONS WOULD UNDERMINE SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONS  
AND WEAKEN ASAD'S DOMESTIC POSITION (REFTEL). HOWEVER,  
NUMBER OF LOCAL OBSERVERS INCLUDING JOURNALISTS, ARAB  
DIPLOMATS, INFLUENTIAL BUSINESSMEN, AND SARG OFFICIALS  
HAVE CONCLUDED THAT INITIAL FEARS UNFOUNDED ALTHOUGH NATURE  
AND TIMING OF ALLEGATIONS CERTWIINLY DID CAUSE CONSIDERABLE  
CONSTERNATION HERE AND TEMPORARILY THREW LEADERSHIP OFF  
BALANCE. THERE IS ALSO LINGERING LACK OF COMPREHENSION AS  
TO WHY "USG LET HUSSEIN BE EMBARRASSED" AT THIS PARTICULAR  
TIME.

2. IN IMMEDIATE WAKE OF ALLEGATIONS, SYRIAN PRESS DELETED  
ANY MENTION OF SUBJECT INCLUDING STATEMENT SUPPORTING  
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HUSSEIN WHICH ASAD MADE TO U.S. JORNALISTS DURING  
SECRETARY'S VISIT. MOREOVER, INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNES  
WHICH CARRIED STORIES ON THIS TOPIC FAILED TO APPEAR ON NEW-  
STANDS, ALTHOUGH FOR SOME MONTHS UNCENSORED COPIES OF  
IHT, NEWSWEEK, AND TIME HAVE BEEN READILY AVAILABLE ON  
NEWSSTANDS. SOME OBSERVERS ALSO CLAIMED THAT HUSSEIN-ASAD  
FRIENDSHIP BEING DOWNPLAYED IN FAVOR OF STATE-TO-STATE  
RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE HAVE AS YET SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF THIS.  
ONLY ONE COMMENTARY IN LOCAL PRESS TOUCHED ON  
AFFAIR, A REPRINT OF RIFIQ KHOURI COLUMN WHICH ORIGINALLY  
APPEARED IN LEBANESE AL-ANWAR. KHOURI ARGUED THAT  
SUPER-POWERS OPPOSED EFFORTS TO UNIFY ARABS.  
IN APPARENT ALLUSION TO HUSSEIN PAYMENTS, HE STATED  
"CARD LAID ON TABLE INONE OF THE MAJOR CAPITALS AIMS  
TO SET FIRE TO ARAB QUADRIPARTITE SUMMIT".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 1841

3. SINCE DISCLOSURES, MEDIA HAS CONTINUED REPORT VISITS  
OF VARIOUS SYRO-JORDANIAN COORDINATION COMMITTEES WORKING  
TO UNIFY SYRIAN AND JORDANIAN DOMESTIC PROGRAMS. ASAD'S  
MEETING WITH HUSSEIN AT AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT GIVEN PRESS PLAY  
AT LEAST EQUAL TO ASAD MEETINGS WITH SADAT. ALSO, BAATH  
PARTY COMMUN-  
IQUE AND SPEECHES PUBLISHED ON MARCH 8 PARTY  
ANNIVERSARY LISTED SYRO-JORDANIAN UNITY STEPS AS ONE OF  
YEAR'S MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS, ALTHOUGH RELATIONSHIP PUT ON  
ABOUT SAME FOOTING WITH SYRO-EGYPTIAN-SUDANESE JOINT  
POLITICAL COMMAND IN FORMUALS USED TO DESCRIBE IT.

4. QUESTION ARISES WHY THESE ALLEGATIONS DID NOT DO ANY  
APPARENT DAMAGE TO THE SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP? MOST OF OUR  
INTERLOCUTORS AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

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A. FRONT-LINE ARAB STATES COMMITTED TO WORK FOR  
PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY SIDE ISSUES.

B. EXTREMELY CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP HAS DEVELOPED BETWEEN ASAD AND HUSSEIN.

C. SHOCK EFFECT OF STORY LARGELY DISCOUNTED IN ADVANCE SINCE BOTH FRIEND AND FOE HAD LONG SUSPECTED SUCH RELATIONSHIP AND ALL AWARE HUSSEIN HAD EXTREMELY CLOSE TIES WITH U.S., A RELATIONSHIP WHICH ASAD HAS USED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION.

D. BELIEF THAT IF ASAD COULD WEATHER CRITICISM IN 1976 OF HIS POLICIES IN LEBANON, HE COULD EASILY FACE DOWN HIS CRITICS OVER THIS ONE.

E. NEED TO MAINTAIN CLOSE SYRO-JORDANIAN COORDINATION TOWARDS SETTLEMENT PROCESS IN ORDER TO COUNTER-BALANCE PERCEIVED EGYPTIAN TENDENCY TO GET TOO FAR OUT IN FRONT OF SYRIAN POLICIES AND TO KEEP OPTIONS OPEN FOR SOLUTION OF PALESTINIAN ISSUE.

F. BELIEF THAT PRO-ISRAELI SOURCE LEAKED STORY TO TORPEDO ARAB COORDINATION OF PEACE OFFENSE.

G. LACK OF CRITICISM APPEARING IN ARAB MEDIA, WITH EXCEPTION OF IRAQ WHICH USED AFFAIR TO ATTACK ASAD MORE THAN HUSSEIN, ALSO MADE IT EASIER FOR SYRIA TO CONTAIN DAMAGE.

5. IF PACE OF SYRO-JORDANIAN UNITY EFFORTS HAVE SLACKENED SOMEWHAT IT RESULTS FROM FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS OF TWO STATES AND DIFFICULTIES IN OVERCOMING THEM WHICH BECAME MORE APPARENT WHEN HUSSEIN REPLACED PRIMIN RIFA'I WITH BADRAN. NEW TEAM, AS EMBASSY AMMAN'S REPORTING AFFIRMS, IS MUCH LESS ENTHUSIASTIC  
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TO PURSUE UNIONIST POLICIES WITH SYRIA. ASAD'S REPORTED FAILURE TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH HUSSEIN BEFORE JETTING TO CAIRO IN DECEMBER AND ANNOUNCING JOINT POLITICAL COMMAND WITH EGYPT INDICATED SYRIANS SENSED THIS, AND ADJUSTED THEIR POLICIES ACCORDINGLY. WHETHER FAILURE TO ADVISE HUSSEIN BEFOREHAND WAS INTENTIONAL SNUB OR SIMPLY INADVERTENCE IS UNCLEAR.

6. WHILE LOCAL SOURCES DISAGREED WHETHER JORDAN WILL OFFICIALLY ENTER THE JOINT POLITICAL COMMAND AT ARAB MINI-SUMMIT REPORTEDLY TO TAKE PLACE AT END OF THIS MONTH BEFORE ASAD AND SADAT RESPECTIVELY ENGAGE IN SOVIET AND U.S. SUMMITRY, THIS WOULD NOT SEEM HAVE MUCH BEARING ON OVERALL SYRO-JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP. (ACCORDING LATEST

REPORTS, KHADDAM HAS DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF ANY SUCH MEETING.)  
JORDAN AND SYRIA WILL CONTINUE CLOSELY COORDINATE THEIR  
POLICIES VIS-A-VIS THE PEACE PROCESS. BOTH STATES REMAIN  
APPREHENSIVE ABOUT SADAT'S INTENTIONS TO STAY IN HARNESS  
WITH THEM IN PEACE PROCESS, EVINCE SKEPTICISM THAT MUCH  
PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT CAN BE OBTAINED IN 1977 AND  
DESIRE TO HAVE PLO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY CONCESSIONS  
MADE TO ISRAELIS. ALL THOSE FACTORS COMBINE TO MAKE IT  
LIKELY THAT SYRIA AND JORDAN WILL CONTINUE COURSE TOWARD  
ECONOMIC/SOCIAL/CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND TO COORDINATE  
THEIR STRATEGIES AS PEACE PROCESS GAINS MOMENTUM. MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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